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Performance Praxis as Radical Pedagogy: Some Lessons and Reflections on Embodiment and Teaching Since COVID-19

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Five years ago in January 2020, I proposed a new undergraduate art history course on performance art for the upcoming fall. At the time, I wanted to challenge the traditional boundaries of the art history classroom by integrating embodied, participatory approaches to learning. At the small private college where I teach in Central Florida, faculty are given a high degree of autonomy in course design, and the scale of our classrooms—typically no more than fifteen students—lends itself to this kind of experimentation. As such, I attempted to cast the teaching of performance art history through a critical pedagogical model grounded in phenomenology, dialogical exchange, and embodied collectivity. This approach would emphasize the ways bodies come to know, sense, and negotiate one another through shared, relational presence, a process in which the body is never solely individual but is both subject and medium of lived, intersubjective experience.¹

In my initial conception for the course, I drew inspiration from the work of Lygia Clark, a Brazilian artist who led a series of seminars between 1972 and 1976 with students on “gestural communication” at L’Université Paris-Sorbonne.² To me, her collective and participatory propositions with students seemed like the epitome of critical performance pedagogy—an approach rooted in relational and performance-based practices aimed at cultivating critical consciousness.³ For three hours twice a week Clark experimented with some thirty students on various exercises that explored different intersections of embodiment and sensory experience. For one, entitled *Anthropophagic Slobber* (1969/72), Clark asked students to ingest and spit out “slobbered” string, and use it to tie themselves together. Other propositions like *Elastic Net* (1969/72) and *Relaxation* (1969/72) similarly found students entangled, blindfolded, or bound together in collective and sometimes uncomfortable experiences. For Clark and her students, such propositions for shared exchange became ways of learning through relational and embodied dialogues, namely by recasting intersubjective experiences as critical vehicles for thinking about ourselves and each other.⁴

I wanted to bring something of that radical pedagogy to my own students, allowing them to take part in similar—and similarly intimate—propositions. I wanted to offer my students opportunities for touch and shared experience, which, like Clark, I believed could lead

to a deeper understanding of how we perceive and understand the world through our bodies and, inversely, how the world acts and makes meaning upon them. I also wanted art history to feel tangible and alive, something urgent and lived, rather than distant and dry. After all, the historical and contemporary import of performance art lies in the way it animates bodies and spaces, especially in relation to wider socio-political structures. The idea, in other words, was to learn the power of performance and embodiment together by doing. I wanted to offer a course in which students could realize and explore the relational, embodied, uneven, and precarious terms of subject formation alongside a more traditional introduction to some histories of performance art (ca. 1900–today).

And then the world started to shut down. By March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced a sudden and global reconfiguration of educational norms, my course, already on the books for fall 2020, was thrown into uncertainty. A curriculum built on proximity, touch, and shared presence now had to be executed under protocols that forbade physical connection. The core pedagogical values I had hoped to explore—embodiment and relationality—were suddenly reframed as health risks. At the same time, the course felt more urgent than ever.

Following my institution's guidelines, I redesigned the course as a hybrid offering: approximately ten students would attend class masked and distanced in person, while another five joined synchronously via Zoom.⁵ This bifurcated model presented logistical challenges, but it also presented new pedagogical opportunities. On the one hand, a hybrid classroom offered a way to think differently about performance art, namely the effects of mediation and what it means to witness an event retrospectively and through a screen, a recording, or a photograph.⁶ It helped us foreground questions around presence and absence, inviting us to examine how performance art retains—yet also complicates—its claims to immediacy and lived experience. On the other hand, a hybrid classroom helped students realize their own alienated conditions: that so many of our experiences, and so much of our worldview, are shaped and filtered through digital technologies. How might learning about performance art via screens highlight the very real distances that separate us from each other and ourselves? And how might a hybrid model of learning still help us realize and re-claim our own bodies despite conditions of mediated disembodiment? In short, and from these questions, I was no longer simply teaching an experiential course on the history of performance art, one inspired by the methodologies of performance pedagogy; I was also facilitating an ongoing experiment in how performance, as method and subject, might interrogate the very terms of learning and presence under constraint.

This essay revisits that course as a reflective case study, not to document how we “made it work” under exceptional circumstances, but to explore how the constraints of that moment brought into relief the deeper stakes of performance pedagogy more broadly. According to Mia Perry and Carmen Medina, performance pedagogy emphasizes learning through relational, embodied, and participatory practices, in which knowledge emerges as much from the body in space and social interaction as from cognitive or textual engagement. It is a pedagogy that foregrounds intersubjective experience, critical reflection, and the mutual shaping of participants, producing insight through doing rather than through observation alone. As Perry and Medina

put it, it considers “the body itself as a place of learning and experience,” and it allows “for students to exist and explore as inquiring subjectivities.”⁷ Similarly, according to Charles Garoian, performance pedagogy “represents a liminal space, an aesthetic dimension, wherein socially and historically constructed ideas, images, myths, and utopias can be contested and new ones constructed as they pertain to students’ experiences of reality and their desires to transform that reality.”⁸ In other words, the stakes of performance pedagogy are not merely pedagogical; they are ethical and political, insofar as embodied, relational, and performative engagement cultivates awareness of self, others, and the systems and structures shaping our interactions.

In what follows, I consider how my students and I attempted to generate shared experience and critical reflection through performative exercises and assignments, and I consider what those experiences and lessons might mean or look like now. While the COVID-19 pandemic threw the stakes of performance pedagogy—and the histories of performance art—into sharp relief, it also compelled a reckoning with what it means to teach and learn together in moments of crisis and change. I argue this course made it possible to come together in new and otherwise unforeseen ways, especially at a time when physical togetherness became impossible. On the one hand, hybrid learning demanded experimentation with new methodologies: mediated encounters across screens, collective reflection and discussion, and shared yet asynchronous actions—what I call “performance praxes” below. And because students were hungry for connection, given the conditions of the pandemic, when we did come together, it was with a heightened sense of openness and vulnerability, and a willingness to depart from traditional models of learning. On the other hand, the class gave students the opportunity to think differently about their realities—how they are felt, negotiated, mediated, differentiated, and shared—especially as experiences of distance and technological mediation became visible and inescapable. Together, these conditions and the structure of the course made the political and phenomenological dimensions of embodied learning newly palpable, both in and beyond the hybrid art history classroom.

Learning by Doing, Learning Together

When I realized I had to pivot and rework my original intentions for the course, I focused my attention on how best to facilitate community and bodily awareness across digital and physical divides. To do so, I structured the course around weekly “performance praxes.” I borrowed the terms of “praxis” from the Brazilian critical pedagogue, Paulo Freire, whose seminal book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* coalesced pedagogical practice with theoretical concerns regarding a politics of lived experience and subject formation. However, for Freire, the term “praxis” not only integrates theory and practice, but it also lays the foundations for critical consciousness and resistance. He articulates the critical consciousness that he locates in praxis as *conscientização*, or conscientization, or dialogical processes that attempt to raise consciousness by reflecting on how individuals are “situated” in spatial-temporal conditions of oppression, or what he calls “situationality.”⁹

Drawing from these ideas, I designed various praxes, or situated exercises, in which students might deepen both self and collective awareness through an explicit engagement with,

and recognition of, their own phenomenological experiences. For example, each week, and in conjunction with more traditional topic-based lectures, I asked students to perform a task derived from simple instructions that encouraged improvisation.¹⁰ Some of these included: “walk meaningfully for thirty minutes,” “do something that tests your endurance,” “perform something from Yoko Ono’s *Grapefruit* (1964),” “create and repeat an affirmation until it sinks in,” “record your body’s movement in the world,” among others.¹¹ The instructions were purposefully capacious and open-ended, allowing room for imagination and creativity. For example, in class students and I discussed differences between walking mindfully and meaningfully, a distinction that became important to how they approached the exercise. While “moving mindfully” might emphasize inward attention, awareness, and presence in one’s own body, “walking meaningfully” suggests something more outward-facing and relational. It asks for an intentional engagement with space—one that registers how the body takes up, navigates, and even inscribes itself within environments. After learning about Francis Alÿs’s various walks through cities, Diane Borsato’s *Touching 1000 People* (1999/2003), and Richard Long’s *A Line Made by Walking* (1967), students came to understand meaningful movement as something that produces trace, however ephemeral. In this sense, meaning is not only internally cultivated but also spatially and socially articulated.¹² Thus, I pulled from performance histories—including postmodern dance, Fluxus, Happenings, Body Art, and Conceptual Art—and especially from practices that treated simple actions and everyday gestures as sites of inquiry and meaning. In so doing, I wanted to give students opportunity to explore the meaning of mundane movement and behavior in relation to their environment and lived experiences. Such opportunities would not only help instantiate more abstract and theoretical ideas, helping anchor the week’s assigned topic for discussion (e.g., “brainstorm and sketch out a happening after reading Allan Kaprow”), but they would also become the basis for dialogue and critical reflection and consciousness.

At first, the vague nature of the instructions intimidated students. Early in the semester, I received worried emails from students expressing their confusion; they feared they might be interpreting the assigned praxes incorrectly. While I asked all students to carry out the exercises on their own time, I required them to describe and reflect on their initial reactions on an online discussion board (we used Canvas, our university’s learning management platform). Later, we came together in class to compare our different approaches. I encouraged students who felt intimidated and confused to share their experiences and concerns. Others chimed in, admitting they too felt awkward and unsettled by the lack of direction. Yet these very reactions—silliness, discomfort, confusion—quickly became part of the learning. They opened space for students to reflect on their expectations of clarity and correctness and to notice how they responded to ambiguity. In this way, the praxes turned initial uncertainty into a shared point of connection, allowing us to consider how meaning emerges precisely through experimentation and openness.

While many of the ideas for the different praxes related, in some way, to the week’s topic for discussion, they also drew from my own academic research into histories of experimental art education in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States and Canada, including the

conceptual and phenomenological practices adopted at programs like the California Institute of the Arts, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), the Feminist Art Program, and the University of Iowa's (UI) new Intermedia Arts Program. These programs emerged during a profound moment of political rupture and social change, when educators and artists alike were experimenting with the classroom as a space for resistance and political engagement, while upending traditional models of instruction and artistic practice. In developing the praxes for my course, I took inspiration from these histories, and the experiential practices developed therein. For instance, one of my first assignments asked students to consider their bodies and movement by performing a dance score first developed by artist and choreographer Elaine Summers, which she later carried out at UI with students.¹³ The instructions were simple: "move every part of your body once."¹⁴ Summers understood choreography as a structure. And in particular, she understood dance, especially slow, focused movement, as a therapeutic means of developing embodied sensitivity—a realization of one's bodily sensations in relation to others and their surrounds. For Summers, this awareness became a way to heal and liberate the body. Most of my students found the choreography meditative and cathartic, while others found it surprisingly difficult. But in general, their reflections and our subsequent discussions focused on the limitations and languages of our own bodies, especially within and against imposed structure and form.

Another praxis included a submission by a guest artist—an idea that came from David Askevold's famous "Projects Class" in 1971 at NSCAD.¹⁵ For this, I asked Vancouver-based artist Tristan Sober-Blodgett to mail my class a set of instructions that we could carry out individually. (fig. 1) According to Sober-Blodgett's instructions, which constituted the work *Three Colors, Fifteen to Twenty-One Phrases, Indeterminate Number of Meanings* (2020), students were to consider words associated with three colors: Red, White, and Blue. Specifically, Sober-Blodgett asked students "to divide a sheet of paper into thirds," and write three separate lists of words inspired by the color prompts. (figs. 2 and 3) Like the other praxes, the students completed the task on their own time and then brought their lists to class for discussion and comparison. According to the artist, language, as well as the specific colors, served as an "analogue for wider social-political mechanisms," therefore highlighting a core principle of semiotics: that meaning emerges from the relationships between signs and their context. The artist also emphasized "the role of context, first in the choice and order of the colors."¹⁶ (fig. 4) Ultimately, the students' different lists signified how "each sign can exist in a web of context that is ever shifting to the point of being contradictory."¹⁷

This emphasis on language also resonated with our reading of Judith Butler's theory of performativity, where meaning is not fixed but enacted through repeated acts within social contexts.¹⁸ Each student's engagement with the color prompts—selecting, writing, and later discussing words—performed cultural and political associations, materially enacting the very systems of signification the piece sought to illuminate. Sober-Blodgett conceptualized the piece specifically for an American audience of students. And because we had just come out of a contentious election in the United States (November 2020), many of the words that students selected in relation to each color—red, white, and blue—were politically motivated ("red state,"

“red-blooded American,” “white house,” “white savior,” “boys in blue,” “blue state,” “feeling blue”), demonstrating the ways that signs carry social and political power. The artist encouraged students to send their words to their congressperson of choice. And while I am unsure of how many students did this, the work generated discussion about the capaciousness of sign systems and the cultural meanings and practices we associate with them.

Three Colors, Fifteen to Twenty-One Phrases, Indeterminate Number of Meanings
Tristan Sober-Blodgett
2020

Divide a sheet of paper into thirds. You will be given three writing prompts in the form of color names. For each prompt you will write five to seven common phrases that include the prompt word. For example, if the prompt is “green” common short phrases would be “green with envy”, “making green”, “Green New Deal”. Each phrase should be no more than three words. It is fine if two colors prompt similar phrases such as “green light” and “yellow light”.

At the top of the first third of your paper write the word RED.
Below it, write five to seven common phrases that include the word red.

At the top of the next third of your paper write the word WHITE.
Below it, write five to seven common phrases that include the word white.

At the top of the last third of your paper write the word BLUE.
Below it, write five to seven common phrases that include the word blue.

Consider the relationship of each word and phrase to each other.

Fig. 1. Tristan Sober-Blodgett, *Three Colors, Fifteen to Twenty-One Phrases, Indeterminate Number of Meanings*, 2020

Following this open-ended model, all of the praxes I proposed were vague and multivalent, and tended to focus on relationships between movement, language, spaces, behaviors, and bodies. In the case of Sober-Blodgett’s assignment, this emphasis on language and signification was shaped by the artist’s own conceptual concerns, which foregrounded semiotic processes as a way of engaging social and political meaning. More broadly, however, my pedagogical aim was not to privilege semiotics as a primary framework, but to situate it alongside embodied and relational forms of knowing. I wanted students to explore movement, meaning, and possibility against and within a broad range of rules and restrictions, helping them imagine—and re-imagine—the terms of what is possible within imposed systems and structures, whether that is a strict score, an open set of directions, or the procedures and norms established by socio-political systems. These praxes not only made connections between performance art and embodiment more immediate and tangible, but they also offered opportunities to come together and reflect critically on ourselves, each other, and our shared, situated realities.

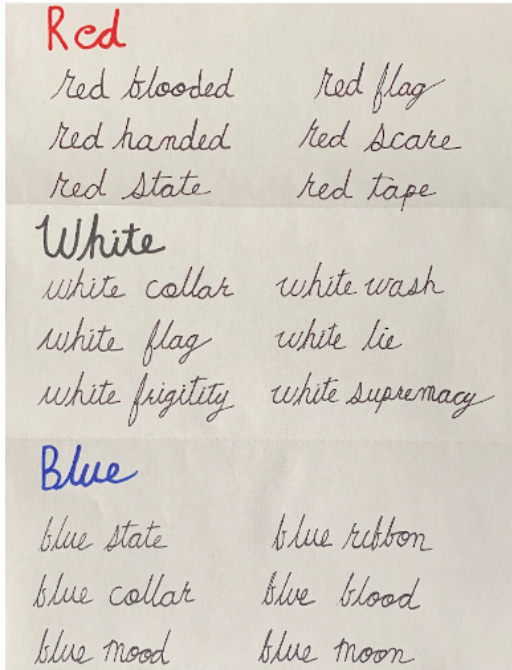


Fig. 2. Tristan Sober-Blodgett, Artist's own iteration of *Three Colors, Fifteen to Twenty-One Phrases, Indeterminate Number of Meanings*, 2020. Sent to the students as an example, accompanying the instructions.

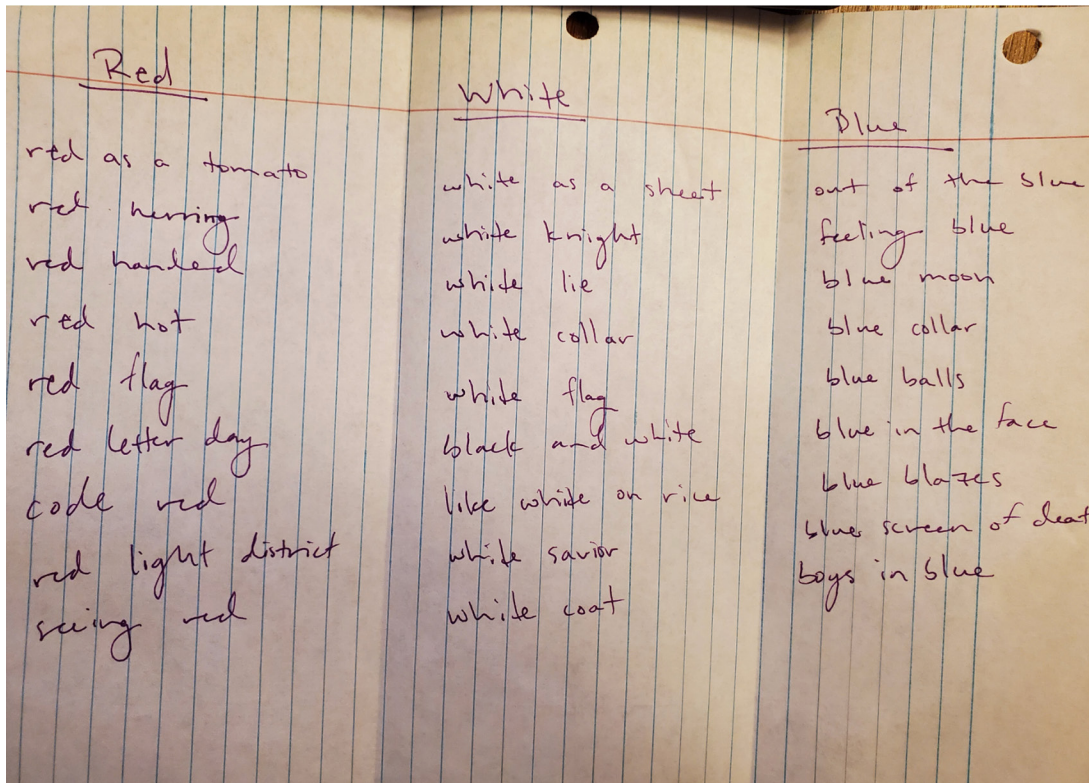


Fig. 3. Student Interpretations, *Three Colors, Fifteen to Twenty-One Phrases, Indeterminate Number of Meanings*, 2020

Three Colors, Fifteen to Twenty-One Phrases, Indeterminate Number of Meanings
Tristan Sober-Blodgett
2020
Artist Statement

As in many of my works, *Three Colors, Fifteen to Twenty-One Phrases, Indeterminate Number of Meanings* employs language and its functions to act as an analogue for wider social-political mechanisms. This work returns to a basic tenant of semiotics: that a sign such as the sounds or letters that compose the word “red” carry no inherent meaning, but have significance between interlocutors. The piece further stresses the role of context, first in the choice and order of the colors. The words “Red, White and Blue” immediately call to mind symbols of patriotism to an American audience. In investigating how else these words are used *Three Colors [...]* *Indeterminate Number of Meanings* illustrates how each sign exists in a web of context that is ever shifting to the point of being contradictory. Red can signify both a conservative state and a perceived threat of communism. Blue denotes a laboring class in “blue collar” but an elite class in “blue blooded.” Each sign is simultaneously neutral and highly charged, often with opposing meaning.

This piece was created as an interactive exercise for an American audience. Upon completing the instruction to generate the fifteen to twenty-one phrases each participant should consider the meaning of the phrases in relation to each other and in the context of a national identity. When finished I highly encourage each person to fold the paper back up, place it in an envelope and mail it to their congressperson of choice.

Fig. 4. Tristan Sober-Blodgett, Artist statement for *Three Colors, Fifteen to Twenty-One Phrases, Indeterminate Number of Meanings*, 2020.

Putting it all Together: The Final Assignment

In addition to the foregoing weekly performance praxes, the course culminated with a project that asked students to re-perform a famous performance. I used this project as an opportunity to discuss the ethics and potential problems with re-performance.¹⁹ I also encouraged students to consider their own subject positions. Namely how their situation, lived experience, race, ability, class, and background could inform their different interpretations.²⁰ Many students decided to embrace the anxiety of the pandemic. One student, for instance, re-interpreted Martha Rosler’s *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) by foregrounding quarantine essentials, including hand sanitizer, wipes, and toilet paper among the alphabetical list of items. (fig. 5) Another student re-performed Mierle Laderman Ukeles’s *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside (July 23, 1973)* by putting specific emphasis on the otherwise invisible and gendered labor and care taken by her own mother in the home. (fig. 6) One performance re-interpreted the action painting of Jackson Pollock through a queer and feminist lens, incorporating hair pins, hair bands, and glitter among the random detritus that fell from their pockets and onto the canvas as they danced and flung pink and purple paint. Niki de Saint Phalle’s *Tirs* (1961) became ground for another performance, re-titled here as *Therapy in Nine Colors*, with a student taking a canvas with paint-filled balloons to a shooting range. (fig. 7) Another student found calm and consistency in the structure of Alison Knowles’ *Identical Lunch* (since 1968), re-framing the

banality of Knowles's performance as an opportunity to discuss the repetitive actions of taking daily medications for her physical and mental health, something that several students identified with.²¹

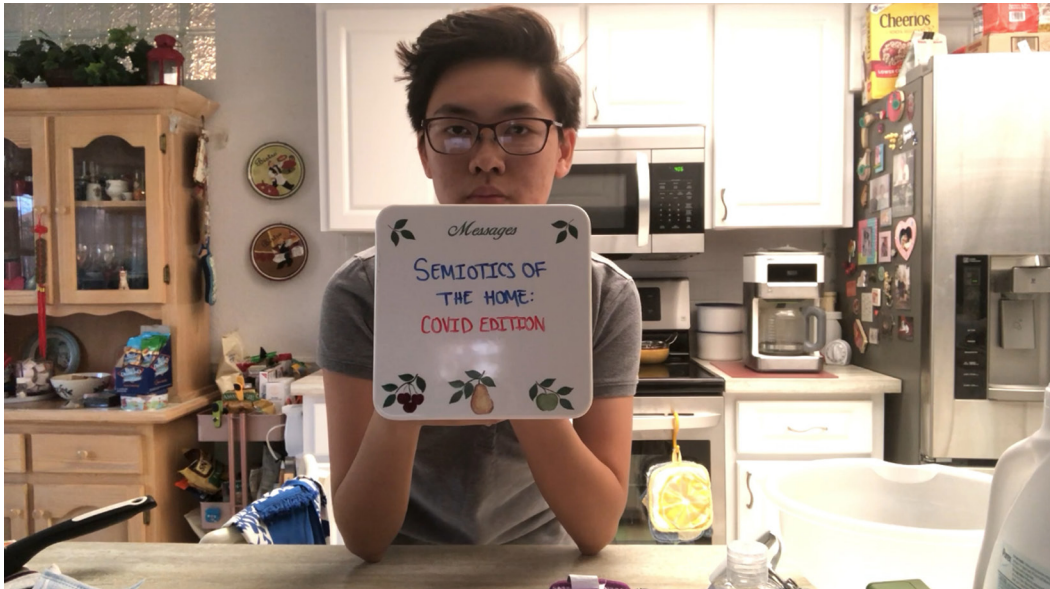


Fig. 5. Student, still from student presentation, *Semiotics of the Home: Covid Edition*, 2020; a re-performance of Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975).



Fig. 6. Student, still from student presentation, *Maintenance and Motherhood*, 2020; a re-performance of Mierle Laderman Ukeles's maintenance art performance series, 1973–1974.



Fig. 7. Student, still from student presentation, *Therapy in Nine Colors*, 2020; a re-performance of Niki de Saint Phalle's *Tirs*, 1961.

In our last weeks together, the students performed, discussed, or played recordings of their re-performances over Zoom, while giving a well-researched, analytical presentation on their approach. In preparing for this final component, I asked students to write a proposal and situate their chosen work within its historical, theoretical, and artistic contexts, drawing from course readings as well as independent research. At the same time, I encouraged them to consider how their own embodied experiences and subject positions shaped their interpretations. Their fellow classmates listened, gave constructive feedback, and most often, their genuine praise.

I, too, was impressed. My students embraced all of these assignments more than I ever expected. And I have every reason to consider the class a success. Students did extraordinarily well in the course overall and they remarked in their evaluations how engaged they felt throughout the term. While the course met its designated course learning outcomes—which I developed and described in the syllabus before the course began²²—the most profound achievements emerged organically through experimentation across the semester: students felt connected, we cultivated complex and nuanced discussion, and we managed to achieve an intimate, collaborative experience despite the hybrid classroom format. Above all, I believe my students walked away from the course not only with a new appreciation for performance art, but also with a deeper understanding of the precariousness nature of embodiment and lived, phenomenological experience.

Some Cautious Conclusions

There is much to celebrate with this class, especially the creativity and resiliency demonstrated by my students. At the same time, in the years since the pandemic I have grown wary of this kind of perspective and the ways it might erase the struggles and sacrifices of this moment, including what was asked of us by administrators, board members, students, and their parents. Instead, I have become more interested in what did not work with this class, and what got lost in the transition despite our best efforts: touch and togetherness, the precarious and sometimes

uncomfortable texture of relations that exceed the bounds of a flattened screen, our bodies, and our messy, shared presence in space together.

As bell hooks reminds us, “being comes from the body. And if we listen to our bodies inside the classroom and out we learn more ways to relate to one another.”²³ Indeed for hooks, attending to different social and affective interactions becomes a way of encountering knowledge differently, especially through embodiment and intersubjective exchange. Thus, what makes the field of performance so effective as a critical, radical pedagogy is precisely its potential to facilitate these kinds of relations. It can give feeling and form to the embodied, sensorial “postures and postulations of everyday life.”²⁴ Looking back, I cannot say with any real certainty what each student took from the class. At times our work together felt cathartic and generative; other times it felt desperate and unsettled, especially given the throes of the pandemic. These different experiences, I think, speak to the conditions under which we were learning—conditions that align with what is often described as social-emotional learning or trauma-informed pedagogy, where attention to affect, vulnerability, and relational dynamics becomes inseparable from the work of learning itself. If anything, those moments of uncertainty did not detract from students’ engagement with the material, but seemed to deepen it, even if in ways that resist easy articulation or assessment.²⁵ Perhaps these feelings and encounters are the point. Not only were they reminders of what was lost and gained, but the very moments in which we could learn more ways to relate to one another.

I think my course did what it needed to do given the moment, but it was not enough. How could it be? Teaching this course again in the years since, I have gained back the physical presence my students and I first mourned. But I have also felt the absence of the urgency and vulnerability that the pandemic once made palpable. Moving forward, the challenge now is how to preserve the empathy and experimental spirit that emerged from crisis, while reasserting the political and pedagogical power of embodied collectivity and situated knowledge, both in the classroom together and beyond it.

Returning to the original inspiration for this class, Lygia Clark understood the potential of embodied learning when she developed her propositions with students in Paris after the uprisings of May 1968. The protests were deeply shaped by the legacy of French colonialism, particularly in North Africa, which fueled anti-imperialist demands alongside broader frustrations with political and social institutions. In the wake of this revolutionary moment, however, France experienced a swift conservative backlash and a tightening of political control. Clark herself had just fled a brutal military dictatorship in Brazil, and she brought to her work a consciousness shaped by government oppression and the colonial legacies of Portuguese rule. Thus, for her and her students in Paris, collaborative and embodied learning offered ways to heal, to come together, and to re-assess one’s own place within a wider socio-political and relational context, especially in the wake of political trauma and upheaval.

Today in the United States, students and educators face increasingly compounded challenges: political and ideological attacks on higher education, inclusion, and radical inquiry; cuts to humanities programs and education; the aftermath and consequences of the pandemic and remote/hybrid learning; and the disembodied threat of artificial intelligence (to name

only a few). In the years since my initial course, the ethical and political imperatives of performance pedagogy have come into sharper relief. Now more than ever students need to connect in real, palpable ways, regarding bodies and experiences that are collectively and unevenly formed, while harnessing relationality as a framework for critical consciousness and resistance. Moving forward, we must remember and preserve what performance pedagogy makes possible: a way to feel, to question, and to build otherwise together and through our bodies. It can open a path toward critical consciousness. And it can give space to realize and reconfigure what radical action and thought might mean or look like now, especially within or against oppressive systems that threaten the integrity of difference and learning.

Notes

1 My understanding of embodied collectivity is informed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (Routledge, 2012). See also Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (University of Indiana Press, 1994). In the years since the pandemic, I have also leaned on Stephanie Springgay's conception of "feltness," which describes a pedagogy that is relational, transcorporeal, and affective, as a way to think about embodied collectivity in learning. See Stephanie Springgay, *Feltness: Research-Creation, Socially Engaged Art and Affective Pedagogies* (Duke University Press, 2022).

2 For a smart and critical analysis on Clark's collective propositions with students in Paris see: Andre Lepecki, "Affective Geometry, Immanent Acts: Lygia Clark and Performance," in *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948-1988*, eds. Cornelia Butler and Luis Pérez-Oramas (Museum of Modern Art, 2014), 285–286. See also Kristen Carter, "Lygia Clark and the Logics of Participation after 'Failed' Revolt," reprinted with a new introduction in *Excursions: Commemorative Issue* 10, no. 2 (Winter 2020): 141–161; Susan Best, "Lygia Clark, the Paris Years: The Body as Medium and Material," in *The Aesthetics of Matter: Modernism, the Avant-Garde and Material Exchange*, eds. Sarah Posman, Anne Reverseau, David Ayers, Sascha Bru and Benedikt Hjartarson (De Gruyter, 2013), 292–301; Suely Rolnik, "Lygia Clark: From Object to Event," *Raven Row*: n.p., accessed August 24, 2018, <http://www.ravenrow.org/texts/17/>.

3 For general sources on and definitions of critical performative pedagogy and how it intersects with artistic and performative practice see: Felicia Washington Sy, "The Artist, the Activist, the Academic: Building a Critical Pedagogy of Embodied Knowledge," *Reflections* vol. 19, no. 3 (February 2015): 7–20; Mia Perry and Carmen Medina, "Embodiment and Performance in Pedagogy Research: Investigating the Possibility of the Body in Curriculum Experience," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* vol. 27, no. 3 (2011): 62–75; Charles R. Garoian, *Performing Pedagogy: Toward an Art of Politics* (State University of New York Press, 1999).

4 At stake in Clark's work is that critical reflection offers potential for catharsis, a way to come together differently, and space for social and political resistance and transformation. Indeed, as Clark put it, "the meaning given to [the propositions] is that there is a socializing in time and a joint elaboration in which each individual changes, expressing himself, connecting affectively or not to each element in the group, creating an exchange of impressions which goes beyond the propositions and affects the life of each member." *Lygia Clark*, exh. cat. (Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1998), 306. See also Andre Lepecki, "Affective Geometry" and Carter, "Lygia Clark and the Logics of Participation" for a discussion on the pedagogical import of Clark's propositions.

5 This model and these numbers never changed. Before the semester began, students selected to either learn from home or in the classroom. They could not change their "status" during the semester.

6 For more on the implications of mediation in performance art, see Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (Routledge, 1996).

7 Perry and Medina, "Embodiment and Performance in Pedagogy Research," 63.

8 Garoian, *Performing Pedagogy*, 10.

9 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 109.

10 All my students identified as able-bodied and were willing and able to take part in the different performance praxes. If a student—for whatever reason—was unable or unwilling to participate, I encouraged them to reach out to me. Together we would find alternative practices and strategies. I also devised the different praxes with a general sense of my class and students beforehand. This is one of the great advantages of teaching at a small college; I was familiar with most, if not all, of my students and majors who signed up for the course.

11 Sometimes I provided simple statements or instructions and nothing else, keeping interpretations open, and other times I gave more context and direction to historically situate the prompt.

12 I recognize that framing the prompt as “walking” presumes a particular set of bodily capacities. As discussed in the footnote above, I designed these praxes with a clear sense of the students enrolled in the course, and would have adjusted or reimagined the assignment in response to any individual needs or accommodations.

13 For more on the histories of the Intermedia program at the University of Iowa see: Hans Breder and Klaus-Peter Busse, eds. *Intermedia: Enacting the Liminal* (Books on Demand GmbH, 2005); Jessica Santone, “Teaching Intermedia: Body, Community, and Site” in *Anti-Academy*, ed. Joan Giroux (John Hansard Gallery, 2014), 59–70.

14 See Elaine Summers, “Infinite Choices: Improvisation in Choreography and Filmmaking” in *Intermedia: Enacting the Liminal*, 197–201. In this essay Summers explained, “choreography is the making of a structure” (197).

15 The artist and educator David Askevold asked friends and other artists to mail his students instructions that they would carry out in class. Participants included Mel Bochner, John Baldessari, Lucy Lippard, Robert Smithson, Joseph Kosuth, Dan Graham, among others. See Garry Neill Kennedy, *The Last Art College: Nova Scotia of Art and Design, 1968-1978* (MIT Press, 2012).

16 Tristan Sober-Blodgett, artist statement for *Three Colors, Fifteen to Twenty-One Phrases, Indeterminate Number of Meanings*, 2020.

17 Ibid.

18 See Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” in *The Art of Art History*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford University Press, 2009), 356–366. I asked students to read this excerpt during our discussions on queer theory and performativity.

19 In conjunction with this assignment, I asked students to read Abigail Levine’s short essay, “Marina Abramovic’s Time (2010),” which argues that “Reperformance must, essentially, become performance, an exchange in the present” (165). Together we discussed and used this essay as a basis to discuss what a reperformance is and/or could be. That to reconsider and reperform a famous performance is, by its very nature, to consider “the *how* of the work, the experiencing of the way the work is unfolding in time” (166). In other words, I wanted students to consider deeply the ways in which their own experiences, identity, and context can affect something that once belonged to a different moment, performer, and audience. Gen-

erally speaking, students were careful not to select a performance that would mis-appropriate certain histories, identities, and lived experiences. See: Abigail Levine, “Marina Abramovic’s Time (2010),” in *Memory*, ed. Ian Farr (MIT Press, 2012), 164–167.

20 Before executing their final re-performances, students had to write formal research proposals, which I had to approve. Questions that I asked students to consider in their proposals included: “What does it mean to re-create a famous performance? What performance will you select and why? How will you—whether implicitly or explicitly—offer your own spin and interpretation? What impact does your situation, lived experience, and history have on the performance’s re-creation? What did the performance mean then and what does it mean now? Finally, how will you share this performance with the world [i.e. your peers]?” (Kristen Carter, “Assignment Guidelines,” ARH 3800: On the Histories of Performance Art: Since 1900 (Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL., Fall 2020). Students also had to include a formal plan of action with their proposals, which answered the following questions: “How will you approach your re-performance? What are the guidelines you will follow? How did you establish these guidelines, and why? How will you execute it? Is it feasible? Is it safe? How long will it take? Does it include participants? Is it possible within the time frame?” Students understood that I would not approve a performance if it was not safe or if it did not meet the college’s code of conduct.

21 One of the goals for this exercise was for students to take stock of the distance between their moment and the histories and experiences preceding them, while also considering their own power and privilege. And while I introduced students to histories and experiences beyond the western canon, students gravitated toward artists with whom they shared similar identities. For example, white upper-class students were careful not to appropriate or conflate experiences that belonged to other groups and communities, especially without a critical re-framing. In the second iteration of this class (Spring 2023), and based on the demographics of my students that semester, the projects drew from more diverse histories and experiences.

22 According to my syllabus, the learning outcomes were as follows: “Throughout this course special emphasis will be placed on the development of visual, performative, and textual literacy, specifically by building the conceptual and communicative tools necessary for critically looking, thinking, and writing about Performance Art. By the end of this course, students should be able to (1) identify several concrete ways in which artists used their bodies and performance to expand the parameters of art throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, (2) identify and define key terms and main arguments that have shaped the history of Performance Art, (3) critically describe and analyze a work of Performance Art in relation to relevant theoretical concepts and historical context, (4) explain how bodies and experience are imbricated in relations of power and ideology, and (5) draw connections between bodies, personal experience, and the world around them” (Kristen Carter, “Syllabus,” ARH 3800: On the Histories of Performance Art: Since 1900 (Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL., Fall 2020/3).

23 bell hooks, “Touch,” in *Teaching Critical Thinking* (Routledge, 2010), 153.

24 I credit and thank Sampada Aranke for this brilliant phrasing during a panel discussion at the Relationality in American Art conference (The Courtauld, June 2021).

25 See Janice Carello and Phyllis Thompson, eds., *Lessons from the Pandemic: Trauma-Informed Approaches to College, Crisis, Change* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).